



The Cleveland Museum of Art

January 10, 1994

Contact: Greg Donley

Land of Sky and Water: 19th-Century Photographs of the American West
January 14-March 27, 1994

The Cleveland Museum of Art's ongoing series of photography exhibitions in gallery 105 continues with the opening on January 14 of **Land of Sky and Water: 19th-Century Photographs of the American West**. The show draws on the Museum's fine collection of vintage photographs to provide illuminating background for the major loan exhibition, **Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography**, which opens February 2 in the Special Exhibition galleries.

Because the 19th-century exploration of the frontier coincided with the invention and popularization of photography, many of the greatest early photographs made in this country documented the Western landscape. It was ideal subject matter, both impressive and immobile. The labor-intensive techniques of the early photographers, who roamed the frontier with huge hand-made cameras and covered-wagon darkrooms, are long outmoded. To make an albumen print from a wet collodion negative, for instance, chemical solutions were layered on a large glass plate to create a light-sensitive emulsion which had to be kept wet and in complete darkness until the photographic exposure was made; after drying, the resulting glass negative was used to make prints on paper coated with egg-based silver emulsion. These weren't snapshots.

While much has changed in the practice of photography since the 19th century, the subtle beauty of these prints has rarely been surpassed, despite the extreme challenges of making such photographs in the field. The works in the show reflect the refined aesthetic sense—and the fierce determination—of such important early figures as William Bell, John K. Hillers, William Henry Jackson, Eadweard Muybridge, Timothy O'Sullivan, and Carleton Watkins. The 19th-century perspective also provides an interesting foundation for understanding the contemporary visions of the landscape seen in **Between Home and Heaven**. This exhibition, which includes 18 prints from the permanent collection and private lenders, was organized by Tom Hinson, curator of contemporary art. Admission to this exhibition and to The Cleveland Museum of Art is free.